

REMARKS

1. Status of the Application

Claims 1–23 were previously pending in the application. Claims 6 and 16 have been cancelled by way of the present Reply. Therefore, claims 1 to 5, 7 to 15 and 17 to 23 remain in issue in the current application.

2. Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 102

Claims 1, 2 and 15 to 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102 as being unpatentable. Claim 6, which was indicated in the Office Action to be allowable, has been incorporated into claim 1 thus making claim 1 allowable. Claim 2 depends from claim 1 and is also allowable. Claim 15 has been amended to also include the features of claim 6 and, thus, corresponds to claim 1. Hence, claim 15, along with dependent claim 17, is also allowable. Accordingly, the rejection is now considered moot.

3. Rejection of Claims under 35 U.S.C. 103

Claims 3, 13 and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable. As discussed above, claim 6 has been incorporated into independent claims 1 and 15, making those claims allowable. Claims 3, 13 and 14 depend from claim 1. As such, these claims are also allowable. Accordingly, this rejection is now considered moot.

4. Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 4 to 12 and 18 to 23 stand as being allowable subject to their being rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Since the subject matter of claim 6 has been incorporated into claims 1 and 15 rendering those claims allowable, dependent claims 4, 5, 7-12 and 18-23 are also allowable.

Conclusion

In view of the arguments presented above, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1 to 5, 7 to 15 and 17 to 23 are now in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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